

GIULIANI, LUCA

### The Archaic Metopes of Selinunt

[“Die archaischen Metopen von Selinunt”]

Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1979; VIII, 89 pp., 24 plates

As the first comprehensive account for more than a century of the important archaic school of sculptured metopes at Selinunt, the far western outpost of Greek colonization in Sicily, this German-language Basle dissertation of 1975 attempts to assess this much-discussed material as a whole in its local setting and to show its stylistic idiosyncrasy. Unfortunately, some unpublished recent or minor finds could not be included in this study.

A short discussion of the origin of the sculptured metope in mainland Greece starts from H. Kähler’s study of the Greek metope (*Das griechische Metopenbild*, Munich 1949). Giuliani shows that there is a stylistic difference from the mainland, but no real tradition of metopes emerging in Sicily except at Selinunt. The subject of the earliest possible candidates as Sicilian metopes, the Gorgo (for which cf. now J. Floren, *Studien zur Typologie des Gorgoneion*, Münster 1977), returns on metope 1 of temple C at Selinunt.

The main part of the book is devoted to the discussion of what remains of the metopes of the two sixth-century temples C (p. 11–36) and Y (p. 37 to 66) on the acropolis of Selinunt. A detailed description and interpretation as well as a stylistic evaluation, including a review of the archaeological discussion since the early 19th century, is given to each metope.

The themes and compositions seem to have been inspired from mainland or East Greek models, but some show instructive variations and sometimes a special taste for older or out-of-fashion schemes and picture types, whether just from traditionalism or, as Giuliani sometimes prefers to suppose, from a conscientious eclectic attitude.

In general, Giuliani points out a structural difference between the C-metopes and the mainland Greek relief of the time: In spite of the extreme height of the relief in some places, the artist worked from the front of the block as far down as seemed necessary to him, the left-out frame thus creating a space in which the figures are developed – instead of the figures being developed in front of a plain background, which forms an integral part of the architecture. Giuliani claims that this is not just an outdated, but a different approach, which necessarily leads to a different stylistic result, conceived more in levels than in volume.

In discussing C 1, Perseus killing Gorgo Medusa, he gives a detailed account of the long debate on the date of the metope. From the stratigraphically fixed date of the terrace of temple C in the second quarter of the sixth



century, no more than a *terminus post quem* can be deduced for the metopes, especially considering the chronological difference Giuliani is able to demonstrate between the architecture and metopes of temple Y. Against Ross Holloway's thesis that the drapery in C 1 was retouched after half a century, a comparison with vases by the Amasis or the Andokides painter, or the slightly more advanced Siphnian treasury frieze, supports a date of about 530 BC, as suggested by Langlotz. A good reconstruction sketch is given for C 6, though it is not quite clear how its battered fragments may be separated from the rest (p. 67–71) as stylistically half a century later. The profile view of both figures derives from the subject, not from the stylistic stage. A third fragment on exhibition in the National Museum at Palermo, which seems to complement the body of the aggressor in accordance with the rendering in other C-metopes, is left out in the reconstruction. In the later sixth century, a female figure in profile should be more distinctive. If the sitting victim was a man, on the other hand, other interpretations are possible, for instance Priam and Neoptolemus.

As for the smaller temple Y, Giuliani shows by stylistic analysis that except for Y 1, which goes together with the somewhat earlier architectural fragments, its metopes must be later, about the middle of the sixth century – according to his chronology also later than temple C. In the soft, flat modelling and comparatively unstable but mobile forms he sees some Ionian influence, in accordance with the Eastern import that appeared at about the same time among the terracottas of the Demeter Malophoros sanctuary. The iconographic analysis shows some fine and – to our knowledge – primary conceptions in this series of metopes, and the author points out that the concurrence of Heracles and the bull and Europe might suggest an iconographic programme referring to Selinunt's 'refoundation' Heraclea Minoa.

The final pages (73–80) review the further development of Selinuntian metope sculpture during the Severe Style, where the same constellation still prevails: this time Attic influence is transformed and adapted in the metopes of temple F and reliefs from two smaller temples, and Ionian, probably Parian, in the marble heads of the metopes of temple E. For the latter he elaborates on Fuchs's division between four masters, including the sculptor of the warrior torso at Akragas as the senior, but rejects an influence of Empedocles' activities at Selinunt on the iconographic programme. The dualism of a male and a female figure in each metope needs no theoretical Pythagorean foundation for explanation.

The book succeeds in characterizing the specific features of the Selinuntian sculptural school, even if the 'Non-Greek' is rather stressed in order to counter the reproach of 'provincialism'. It provides a good interpretation,



sound judgement and thorough information on previous research. The traditional German archaeologists' idiom may cause some difficulty to foreigners. Several good plates help the reader to understand the text without the aid of other books and complement the photographs already known.

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